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**An empirical study on Party Switching in Turkey**

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### *Abstract*

*Party switching is a frequently observed political behaviour in Turkish political life. In the literature, switching is defined as party mobility of a currently selected deputy or a group of deputies to a new party during a legislative session. In this paper, however, switching will be identified as all the party interchange both throughout and between the legislative sessions. Party switching does not only shed light on the individual decision making of the politicians but also explains the evolution of political parties, democratic representation and the electoral competition. Our study will focus on the behaviour of party switchers, the causes behind this political choice in Turkey. Data will contain the politicians who have participated in the general elections held between 1983-2015 period. It does not matter whether the politician is elected or not. Our main concern is under which banner politicians have participated in the elections. Literature review reveals that there exists two main factors behind the switching: First, individual motivations like having a seat in the parliament and being closer to state resources have great importance for the decision of the switchers. On the other hand, primary motivation of the politicians to get a seat in the parliament might be concerns for policy. They search for the party in which they might have a strong position to implement policy; thus represent his/her electorate effectively. By following this theoretical framework, we construct our main hypotheses to understand the reasons of Turkish politicians' switching behaviour. In this empirical study our aim is to test these hypotheses using the data set containing all the candidates (selected or not) participated in the general elections held in Turkey between the 1983-2015 period by following their party affiliations and switching decisions. In conclusion, we intend to have some implications for the political decision making of the politicians in Turkey.*

*Keywords: Party switching, party affiliation, political decision making, democratic representation.*

*JEL classification: D7, C81, Z00*